

## Reports on meetings at the Global Biodiversity Information Facility Secretariat (GBIF), Copenhagen, 14 January 2005, and UNESCO, Paris, 24–29 January and 4 March 2005

Andrew Polaszek, Executive Secretary, ICZN

### GBIF Copenhagen

On 14 January 2005 a one-day workshop on the nomenclatural codes was convened and hosted by GBIF at their headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark. The following participants were present: James Edwards, Per de Place Bjørn and Meredith Lane (GBIF); Chris Lyal (Chair, electronic catalogue of known organism names — ECAT); David Hawksworth (BioCode); Mike Mayo (virus code); Brian Tindall (prokaryote code); John McNeill and Nick Turland (botanical code); Andrew Polaszek (zoological code) and ICZN Commissioner Claus Nielsen.

**ECAT — electronic catalogue of names of known organisms.** The ECAT project is a GBIF Initiative that aims to provide a ‘names service’ to the biological user community. It does this by forming partnerships with various organisations (‘data providers’) involved in generating databases on living organisms, and sharing this information freely. Most important among the data providers until now is the Catalogue of Life partnership of ITIS (Integrated Taxonomic Information Service) and Species-2000. The ECAT Science Subcommittee wishes to expand its names services by engaging with the nomenclatural representatives of the different biological kingdoms.

A proposal was tabled (Andrew Polaszek) that the ICZN Official Lists and Indexes of Names in Zoology should be digitised and databased in the very near future, and thereby form the basis of ICZN’s contribution to GBIF. Such a project would, however, require financial input which is currently being sought. In order to ratify ICZN-GBIF cooperation, ICZN will become an Associate Participant of GBIF.

**BioCode.** The BioCode proposal (David Hawksworth) for a unified nomenclatural Code for all living organisms received a great deal of attention in publications and discussion lists in the 1990s. Despite the apparent logic of unifying the Codes, it faced very widespread opposition. It is generally thought among taxonomists that the degree of disruption to their current working practices would far outweigh any benefits. During this meeting it was noted that the viral code is the least compatible with the others, lacking binominals and having no Principle of Priority.

Code representatives present agreed to work more closely together in future, with the re-establishment of the International Committee on Bionomenclature (ICBN). While implementation of the BioCode seems unlikely in the foreseeable future, it would be desirable for the Code authorities to a) provide links between their Codes on the web, and b) provide a shared web page where the various Codes could be discussed, particularly in relation to equivalence between terms or lack thereof. A large body of literature already exists on this subject; this could be digitised and placed on the web with relative ease.

### UNESCO, Paris, ‘*Biodiversity: Science and Governance*’

An international congress took place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris 24–28 January 2005. ICZN Commissioner Philippe Bouchet co-chaired a congress

workshop 'Documenting Biodiversity' on 27 January, during which ICZN Executive Secretary Andrew Polaszek gave a verbal presentation entitled 'The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature — a strategic approach for the 21st Century'. A poster with the same title was displayed during the entire meeting. ICZN's fundraising Appeal Patron, Professor Edward O. Wilson, was among the plenary lecturers during the opening day of the meeting, sharing the stage with the French President Jacques Chirac. The week entailed many interesting and useful presentations as well as fruitful meetings and discussions with representatives of several organisations including BioNET International, CITES, GBIF, IUCN, Natural History Museum, London, Smithsonian Institution, and the Zoological Society of London. Andrew Polaszek also met with Elliot Morley, U.K. Minister for Environment and Agroenvironment, to discuss the relevance of ICZN to animal taxonomy and conservation.

Immediately after the Congress a special meeting of ICZN Commissioners was convened at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle on 29 January, with facilities kindly provided by Commissioner Philippe Bouchet. Also present were Commissioners Miguel Alonso-Zarazaga, Shunsuke Mawatari, Alessandro Minelli and Jan van Tol, ICZN Executive Secretary Andrew Polaszek (Chair), Director MNHN Herpetology Department Alain Dubois, and European Association for Zoological Nomenclature (EAZN) Secretary Donat Agosti. Several agenda items were discussed in detail as follows: EAZN — prospects and progress, fundraising in Europe; Code 4<sup>th</sup> Edition — problems and solutions; lists of animal names; solutions to problems in nomenclature of higher taxa; moving BZN to the web; registration of animal names; ICZN Strategy Document and development programme; GBIF report and memorandum of cooperation, and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) memorandum of cooperation. Discussion papers are available (from the ICZN Secretariat) for the agenda items concerning registration, ICZN strategy document and GBIF Memorandum of Cooperation. The main conclusions of the day's discussions were as follows: the European Association for Zoological Nomenclature needs to be revived and actively involved in fundraising for ICZN in Europe, in cooperation with the Secretariat; ICZN Secretariat to digitise and database Official Lists and Indexes and to have them available on the ICZN website; *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* to consider publishing an article by Prof. Dubois on nomenclature in higher animal taxa, i.e. above the family-group level; *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* to recruit a panel of Associate Editors to assist with processing cases; ICZN to develop, in collaboration with other interested parties, a system of registration of animal names, and finally, ICZN to establish three committees on: 1) registration of animal names; 2) Official Lists and Indexes of names and works in zoology; and 3) the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Code. Membership of these committees is not yet finalised, and the ICZN Secretariat welcomes inquiries from all interested parties.

### **UNESCO, Paris, IUBS-ICZ-ICZN meeting**

A meeting was organised at UNESCO, Paris, on 4 March 2005 at the request of the ICZN Executive Secretary. The meeting was kindly hosted by Natarajan Ishwaran (UNESCO Director of Ecological Sciences) and involved the following participants:

Salvatore Arico — UNESCO, Man and Biosphere programme; Per de Place Bjørn — GBIF, ECAT Programme Officer; Philippe Bouchet (MNHN, ICZN Commissioner); Jean-Marc Jallon (Université Paris-Sud; organising Committee, 20<sup>th</sup> ICZ); Hugo von Linstow — GBIF, Dep. Dir. Management & International Relations; Michael Schmitt, Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn (ISZS); Talal Younès — Executive Director, IUBS.

The meeting was convened to address two issues: first, the position of ICZN within IUBS and in relation to the International Congresses of Zoology; second, the planned 2008 celebration of 250 years since Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* (10<sup>th</sup> Edition). On the first issue it was agreed that the International Committee on Nomenclature (ICBN) needs to be re-established. However, the purpose of a revitalised ICBN would be to address the role of biological nomenclature in general, and not just the BioCode (the unified Code for all organisms). Andrew Polaszek, together with the other code representatives, will draft a concept paper detailing the role and function of the new ICBN. It was also suggested that ICBN could be reformed under the umbrella of ICSU, the International Council for Science.

Despite certain problems with the last two International Congresses of Zoology in Greece (2000) and China (2004) with respect to taxonomic and nomenclatural issues, the consensus of the meeting was that the 20<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Zoology, due to take place in Paris in 2008, will provide a good opportunity to re-establish the important relationship between ICZN and the International Congress of Zoology. The main organiser of the Paris 2008 ICZ, Jean-Marc Jallon, welcomed ICZN's participation in the meeting, and in particular the inclusion of the '*Systema Naturae 250*' symposium. This event is being developed as a celebration of 250 years since the publication of Linnaeus's 10th Edition of *Systema Naturae* (1758), generally accepted as the starting point of binominal zoological systematics. The meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the state of zoological nomenclature in an age of rapidly advancing technology, affecting both bioinformatics and systematics. Both GBIF and the Linnean Society of London have already pledged organisational and financial support for the meeting. Further financial support, intended to attract keynote speakers and as many ICZN Commissioners as possible to the meeting, is currently being sought. The 20<sup>th</sup> ICZ will take place in Paris in August 2008. An Organising Committee and Scientific Committee are currently being assembled, and anyone interested in participating in either or both should please contact the ICZN Secretariat.